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WHAT IS RELIGION?

Chapters in a Guide for  
College Discussion Groups

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by

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A.B. University of California, 1922

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Materials are given at the end of each discussion.



## INTRODUCTION

### I.

Religion is as simple as the heart of a little child; but it is also as complex and technical as the speculations of cosmic philosophers. Religion gathers complexity in proportion as thinking has progressed. Knowledge of elementary facts requires only an elementary organization of the mind's life; but when a college training has accomplished what it should accomplish - torn open the mind, and exposed to it a confusing mass of apparently unrelated principles and points of view - then there is necessary some discipline which will progressively bring order into the chaos.

The college student has exactly this experience of confusion. A wise professor may sum up and present a point of view which the student can adopt and which serves to unify the entire field of chemistry or physics or economics. The student of biology may one day happen on a phrase or a diagram which will immediately and permanently illuminate the fact of life in such a lucid intuition that all the multitude of facts and principles and laws forever after appear subsidiary and become means, not ends, of research.

But there is usually lacking in a college such a course as will attempt to do for the whole of life what physics or anthropology do for their respective fields. There are departments of philosophy, but rarely do they allow themselves to over-reach the boundaries of technical discourse or make a sincere attempt to integrate all experience - con-







crete as well as that of the classroom -in terms of a philosophy of life. The modern philosophical departments do not offer extra-scholastic integrations, nor do they care to. A philosopher who allows his thinking to be influenced by such non-rational considerations as form the main body of life outside the study, suffers in the purely logical critique to which his work must be submitted. Philosophies of life must be discovered elsewhere than in the philosophy classroom.

This is because of the entire divorce, in most American schools, of philosophy from religion. Philosophy without religion of some sort has never claimed to be a coördination of life interests and activities, but only of intellectual systems. Religion, on the other hand, is a coördination of the life interests as well as of scientific and intellectual interests. It is a higher type of knowledge just because it is an integrating, unifying, motivating force. It is not a substitute for scientific knowledge, but the world that science studies takes its meaning from it. It is no substitute for philosophical speculation, but the two profoundest concerns of such speculation -meaning and value -need some kind of religious interpretation in order not to land the thinker in stark agnosticism.

Added to this is the fact that, while technical study may continue to ignore religion altogether, the society to which students inevitable belong is "incurably religious." In the long run, society forces an attitude one way or the other. Unfortunately, the courageous life





claims too few such decisions. It is too easy to drift either into glib and superficial accord, or equally glib and superficial disaccord, with the age-old verities of the spiritual life. Only by considering all the knowledge gained in the classroom in the light of an earnest and sympathetic understanding of what is basic in religion can a student really gain a mind of his own. If any fundamental interest is denied consideration, it is bound eventually to fester. If any such interest is carelessly over-ruled, it must some time be faced with seriousness.

It is this sort of process that the writer hopes to assist by means of this series of outlines. One cannot pretend to get at the real heart of the matter in such a series. He cannot give a full account of his own point of view, or arrive at a universally satisfactory outcome. All he can do is to select those aspects of his own experience which have presented the gravest problems, and throw light upon these by information, question and suggestion. No two groups will come to the same conclusion by way of the same steps; perhaps one point or one citation will furnish material for an entire discussion. A variety of contact-points is purposely furnished in order to touch varied intellectual and religious experience. The logical sequence, in the same way, is followed not from point to point so much as from section to section. Some point in each section ought to lead to some other point in a subsequent section. The mind and experience both of leader and group will determine the exact course of the discussion.





## II

The specific occasion and particular purpose of the manual have come out of the writer's experience. In 1923 he had occasion to examine a group of University classes on the relation of science and religion. The peculiar assortment of conceptions and misconceptions which were displayed by this typical group of undergraduates was surprising. It was no wonder that indifference claimed them, with such indifferent notions filling their minds. Nor did it take more than four or five years to discover how **futile** it is to expect pupils to excel their professors in this matter. To put it bluntly, not only do undergraduates display an appalling ignorance of the simplest elements of religion, but even professors for the most part fail to realize that religion is a field to be studied and specialized in, just as is any other subject of human interest and knowledge.

Even Professor Dewey, - probably our least shackled professor, intellectually, - reserves his vague reference to religion to the last two or three pages of a book on general philosophy or social psychology, as if it were something tacked on as an afterthought.<sup>(1)</sup>

The purpose of this manual is to furnish an aid to students who wish to meet with a leader to talk about purely religious problems. It is wholly about religion - what it is, whether it will last, what its grounds of authority are, etc. There are discussion courses on many

(1) e.g. Reconstruction in Philosophy and Human Nature and Conduct.





subjects involving or presupposing religious knowledge, but there is no book, so far as I know, which is concerned with religion itself, and with its place in the various fields touch by students. There is undoubtedly need for such a book. The present chapters are neither "introductory" nor technically advanced. They seek to strike a happy medium by going thoroly but simply into real problems.

A sincere attempt is made to present a scientific study, both as to method and as to content. Scientific method in the study of religion has come to mean the critical evaluation of original sources. As in this case the study is one of opinions about religion, it would be less than fair to select sources which do not fulfil the best thot of whatever viewpoint is being considered, and the citations are therefore the best and most representative which the writer has been able to discover. No doubt in many cases more trenchant and more representative statements could be found; and in such cases they should be substituted or used supplementarily by the group. The truly scientific spirit of empirical investigation and weighing of facts should be preserved.

### III

Group discussion is a method for arriving at reliable conclusions and forming valid opinions. For this purpose it is most valuable. It would be much easier to write an equal number of chapters of a book to present a certain viewpoint. But the harder way is the more profitable, for <sup>a</sup> intelligent opinion comes out of an interply of judgments



rather than from indoctrination with a single viewpoint.

This is directly opposed to the common notion that in the solution of problems, "too many cooks spoil the broth".

Its principle is that coöperation in thinking has as great advantages for the individual as has coöperation in family life or in business.

The rationale of group discussion is expressed by Mr. Harrison Sacket Elliott as follows:

It stimulates individual thinking. It introduces the opinion of experts. It gives an opportunity for a person to know what his neighbor is thinking about. It considers the custom and common practice of the community. It takes into consideration whatever light experience both of the present and of the past has to throw upon the question. But it adds a very important element: namely, group thinking and decision. Talking the question over with other persons, seeing it from more than one point of view, securing the clash of mind with mind, pooling the resources of the entire group, getting the check which comes from differences of opinion - all of these make for clearer thinking and issue in more reliable decision". (1)

To secure an average in mathematical calculation, one must add and divide, and the result is always lower than the highest elements considered. The same is true in calculating resultant physical forces. The lesser forces effect the direction of the larger, diverting them. But in group discussion this is not true. The resultant opinion need not fall below the level of the best mind in the company. "A group discussion," says Mr. Elliott, "makes available these elements in the decisions of a person of good judgment, only it enriches each one of them". (2)

(1) The Why and How of Group Discussion. Ass'n Press 1924.

(2) Ibid., p.6.





have already been drawn, and are already fixed as certain. For the scholastic philosophers, with their absolute, firmly established principles, the Aristotelean logic was final. But in the modern age the discovery of premises is of greater moment than anything else, because given true premises, the logical outcome is assured.

Induction is therefore the chief method of a practicable logic. The process involves deduction, however, and is practically a "see-saw" between the discovery and development of interpretations. It begins with a problem. Abstractly analyzed, the procedure is that described in

(1)

Professor Dewey's How We Think:

1. A felt difficulty
2. Its location and definition
3. Suggestion of possible solutions
4. Development of the bearings of the suggestions
5. Further observation and experiment leading to acceptance of a conclusion.

Intellectual effort arises out of an experience of blocking. When one runs against something new or striking or different, he must either ignore it or place it. To place it means to displace something else, and that involves a struggle. If, for instance, we are presented for the first time with the problem of making a definition of religion, having heretofore supposed that we did know exactly what it was, there enters an element of difficulty which necessitates further investigation.

Then the problem must be narrowed down and defined, so that only relevant solutions may be considered.

In the third stage comes the work of the experts, whose

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views on or solutions of the problem are to be presented in as systematic order as possible.

During the fourth stage, the various solutions are developed and criticised, and as a final step a solution is agreed upon - usually not exactly any of those originally suggested - and further tested to discover its outcome in some new, practical case.

Substantially this procedure is followed in the topics which follow. The aim is to follow a natural sequence of intelligent acts from section to section. Two sections at the beginning of each topic are devoted to introducing the problem and making it live. There follow citations from various authorities - the opinions of the experts - designed to ~~to~~ present varying or opposing points of view, under the caption of "Light on the problem". Then, by means of references to these citations, questions, suggestions, and further information, the general implications are drawn out, the purpose being, generally stated, to focus on the problem. Finally, in "Testing the outcome", new formulations are sought, and their applicability to new problems and more specific items ~~is~~ tested.

## V

There are certain peculiar prerequisites of any discussion on the subject of religion. The first of these is an understanding of the exact spirit in which authorities are cited and suggestions offered. The present writer would





be moving in a line exactly opposite to the ideal spirit of group discussion if he presented authorities, suggestions, comments, or concrete issues with any other expectation than that these would be taken merely for what they are worth. There is necessarily in the compiler's mind a progression by which later citations take precedence over the earlier, and this is bound to show itself in the development. But there is no intention that this should be inevitable, or that the discussion should be "railroaded" to a given end. The opinion of the compiler, as well as those of the writers cited, are subject to criticism and betterment. The object is only to reach the best possible conclusion.

The second requisite of religious discussion is the quality of open-mindedness. The need is not peculiar to religion but exists in any field where opinions differ and experiences are profound. There are those of course who maintain that convictions involve dogmatism. They either use dogmatic utterance to enforce their convictions, or at the opposite pole fight shy of convictions in order to avoid dogmatism. Open-mindedness is the antithesis of dogmatism, but it does not exclude the holding of strong convictions. Open-mindedness in group thinking consists in the balanced, sincere, expression of existing convictions, and the willingness to substitute convictions which upon careful consideration are genuinely felt to be superior.

The third requirement for the successful pursuance of a religious discussion is sympathy with the experiences of other human beings. Most of our harsh differences of opinion



and our antipathies arise from a lack of this sympathy. Ad hominem arguments and personalities in discussions of this kind rob the whole process of its worth by killing mutual trust, hampering free expression, and inhibiting constructive impersonal thought.

The final requirement is an untrammelled sense of values and a willing experimental attitude toward life. The opposite of this is living in a rut. A certain adventuresomeness and a certain sensitiveness to distinctions of value are necessary, and come only thru the exercise of the "experimental temper". In religion, particularly, the man who never ventures beyond known limits is powerless to advance. Religion, as Principal Jacks says, is the event that occurs when the hero in a man takes precedence over the coward. It is something more than mere open-mindedness. It is moral courage. It is willingness to take a risk, to try out the theories that emerge from thought and discussion. Only so will there occur that unification and integration of life which means successful living.





## (Introduction)

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PROBLEM I

JUST WHAT IS RELIGION ?

The Problem of Definition.



## PROBLEM I

### JUST WHAT IS RELIGION ? - The Problem of Definition.

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#### I. Introducing the Problem.

According to Mr. John Morley, "There are said to be ten thousand definitions of Religion".

There is certainly no great subject upon which more wisdom or more ignorance has been expended. It has engaged the study of the profoundest men; yet no fool has been too modest to attempt an opinion.

As a matter of fact, the task of telling just what religion is may seem very easy until it is tried. The fact that there is such universal interest, and that there are so many and varied ideas of its meaning, indicates that religion presents some peculiar, underlying difficulty of definition.

#### II. Experiencing the Problem.

Some time ago a professor asked each member of his class to write his own original definition of religion; which all did. No two of these definitions was the same, altho all the students came from a similar religious background. One factor, emphasized by one student, would be





neglected by the others, and no two adopted the same starting-point in driving at the mark.

### An Experiment

This interesting experiment could be tried in any group. Let some limited time -say two minutes- be allowed for that. Then let each member of the group try orally to express what he himself understands by "Religion". Of course, these will not be finished thots, but the attempt will reveal the characteristic variety of view points. It will be found hard either to "go deep" or to be "glib" about the subject. Most of us must confess that our ideas are partial, untested, and on the whole, unsatisfactory.

### Another appeal to experience

"Religion is either the most important thing in life, or else it is the least important." What light does this dilemma throw upon the usual attitude of students? The average student does not like to accept earnestly the first horn of the dilemma, nor does he feel able honestly to consider the second. In trying to steer between the two, do we not sacrifice something of our mental clarity about what religion is? Is it one of the important things? If so, or if not, can we speak confidently unless we understand the peculiar and characteristic function of religion in life?



### III. Light on the Problem.

There is an almost endless variety of approaches to this problem, merely to enumerate a list would be a waste of time and a bore. On the other hand, it would be intellectually unfair to give only a certain selected viewpoint. The remaining way would be to make a classification based on the "list", and then give representative statements according to these classes of opinion.

Examine these definitions, asking the usual questions regarding a good definition: ( Is it scientific? or literary? Is the approach unduly prejudiced in one way or the other? Does it include too much or too little? Does it clearly focus a single idea- the idea being defined? )

#### Unsympathetic definitions

(1.) "Religion is a pathological ( or diseased ) manifestation of the protective function, a sort of deviation of the normal function-- a deviation caused by ignorance of natural causes and of their effects". - Guiseppe Sergi; ( Les Emotions; p.404.)

(2.) "Religion is a sum of scruples which impede the free exercise of the faculties". Salomon Reinach (Orpheus: A General History of Religions; Eng.Trans. p.3)

#### Sympathetic definitions

Approach thru the developed idea of God.

(3.) "Religion is the belief in an ever living God, that is, in a Divine Mind and Will ruling the Universe





and having moral relations with mankind". Jas. Martineau  
(A Study of Religion; p.1).

(4.) "Religion is a department of that having for its  
object a self-conscious and intellegible Being". Romanes:  
(Thots on Religion; p.41)

An approach thru the "reason"-

(5.) "Religion is the recognition that all things are  
manifestations of a power that transcends our knowledge".  
Herbert Spencer: (First Principles; p.99)

An approach thru "emotion"-

(6.) "Religion is an emotion resting on a conviction  
of a harmony between ourselves and the universe at large."  
McTaggart: (Some Dogmas of Religion: p.3).

(7.) "Religion is the completion of experience thru  
the feeling of values". Hugo Munsterberg: (Grundzüge; p.166)

(8.) "Religion is morality touched by emotion". Matt.  
Arnold: (Literature and Dogma; 1893; p. 46)

The approach thru social morality.

(9.) "Religion is a form of belief providing an ultra-  
rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the  
individual where his interests and the interests of the so-  
cial organism are antagonistic and by which the former are  
rendered subordinate to the latter". Benjamin Kidd: (Social  
Evolution; p. 103)

(10.) "Religion is a passionate desire for working out  
a new, better form of society". Prince Kropotkin; in The



19th Century, Aug. 1904.

(11) "Religion, with its changing forms, may ... be seen in its natural, concrete character as a phase of all socialized human experience". E.S.Ames: (The Psychology of Religious Experience; p. 279-80).

The approach thru the "unified life" -

(12) "Religion is man's whole bearing toward what seems to him the 'Best' or 'Greatest' ". George M. Stratton: (The Psychology of the Religious Life. p.345).

(13) "Religion is the sum total of beliefs, sentiments, and practices, individual and social, which have for their object a power which man recognises as supreme, on which he depends, and with which he can enter, (or has entered) into relation". L. de Grandmaison: (History of Religion; Vol.I,p.3)

(14) "The religious life means the whole existence pitched in a certain key". Geo. Simmel: (Die Religion. p.79).

#### IV. Focusing on the problem.

1. Confusion would certainly result if one were to regard these differing conceptions of religion as mutually exclusive. If it were an "either - or" matter, there would be little hope for eventual clearness. In all life, we try to avoid cast-iron alternatives and medieval logic. So it is in the discussion of religion.

2. What do you think of definitions (1) and (2) ? Do they show an open or a dogmatic attitude? Does Sergi's emphasis





on blind, ignorant fear apply to Socrates, Jesus, St. Francis, or others of like religious genius? In what way does it apply to primitive religions? Is there anything in modern religious life to make Reinach's criticism seem correct? To what extent does modern religion emphasize "negatives" and "repressions" ?

3. Have you any general criticisms of (3) and (4)? Is it any fairer to leave out less advanced elements than it is to neglect the more advanced?

(In any such attempt, one's final evaluation should be based upon the highest development. On the other hand, too particular or too limited definition will be insufficient).

Could we not agree that (3) and (4) are good definitions of modern Christianity at its best?

4. Note the items outstanding in (5), (6), (7), and (8); namely, recognition, emotion, feeling, and morality.

It is interesting to see this variety of emphasis. Spencer does not shut out the emotional or active side of religion, but he stresses the "reasonable"; Nor does McTaggart's view entirely omit intellectual belief.

What is this "feeling of values" in (7) ? Is it anything more than the impression received from viewing a life or a poem or what not, that 'this thing is good, or beautiful, or holy' ?

5. Matthew Arnold's statement is probably the most quoted of any of these. How does it strike you ? How about the other side of religion, seen in (4) ? Could you criticise Arnold's



view on the basis of (12) ? -that is on the basis of the term "whole bearing" ? Is morality the whole bearing?

6. One might criticise the definitions of Kidd and Kropotkin on the same ground.

What great emphasis is here that religious people must not forget ? In your opinion, does religion as finally conceived include the "social" side ? Examine (11) with this question in mind. Is any man ever able wholly to escape from his social environment ?

7. "Fear", "repressions", "belief", "emotion", "morality". Here are psychological points of stress. How does Professor Stratton's definition (12) look, as bringing these together in the term "whole bearing"?

Does the "Best" or "Greatest" in (12) adequately sum up the individual and social aims extrest by "God". "Power", "harmonious Universe", "interests of society", etc.?

Note how de Grandmaison's viewpoint is made explicitly to include the values in all these others.

From what you know of primitive and barbarian religions - (American Indians; Greece of the Iliad and Odyssey), - does (13) cover these stages ? From what you know of the teachings of Jesus, does (13)<sup>apply</sup> appropriately to his religion ?

## V. Testing the Outcome -

1. Is it generally agreed that the "unified life" idea of religion is acceptable?

In the light of the discussion, criticise favorably or





otherwise, the following three ideas of religion:

(a) "...a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life". J.G. Frazer: (The Golden Bough; 2nd Edition, Vol. I, p.63).

(b) "My religion is now as ever the progress of reason; in other words the progress of science". Ernest Renan: (The Future of Science; Preface).

(c) "Not only is Americanism.....a religion, but---it is the noblest of all religions". Thos.Davidson: International Journal of Ethics; Vol.10, p.37ff. art. "American Democracy as a religion".

2. Let the group as a whole try to formulate a new and <sup>definition</sup> inclusive, which will be the result of the best co-ordinated and socialized thinking. Proceed as follows:

In the following list of words, check the ones which the group agrees should be considered as elements in a conclusive conception of religion. Add any others suggested and approved by the group:

The Subject

Belief  
Faith  
Worship  
Emotion  
Fear  
Love  
Sacrifice to  
Sacrifice for  
Morality  
Unselfishness  
Conciliation  
Brotherhood

The Object

God  
Divine Power  
Personality  
Force  
The Ideal  
Harmony  
Father  
Society  
Reason  
The Nation  
Humanity



(Problem I)

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(Problem I - cont.)

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PROBLEM II

IS RELIGION GOING OR COMING ?

The Problem of Survival.





## PROBLEM II

### IS RELIGION GOING OR COMING ? - The Problem of Survival.

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#### I. Introducing the Problem -

About thirty years ago the French sociologist Guyau wrote a book called "The Non-Religion of the Future" in which he prophecied the time when all religions would decay, and their place be taken by a universal knowledge of science and philosophy. Mr. Guyau makes the following confident assertion:

"Assuredly positive religions still exist and long will exist; and as long as they exist they will no doubt do so for reasons; but these reasons diminish day by day and the number of believers diminishes along with them."

(Note, p.17)

There are many like opinions of later vintage than this, but few critics of religion have presented the adverse viewpoint in so scholarly a manner or with so inclusive a scope. Guyan's reasons, too, are the same that one finds among some scientists and philosophers today.

#### II. Getting at the heart of the problem.

A friend tells you, "Sport is on the decline, and I see no hope for it in the future."

What is your first reaction to this statement? Doubt? Denial? Agreement?

How many of the average group would ask first of all,



"Well, what do you mean by sport?"? Yet, is this not the first and most essential step in accepting or criticising an opinion? Does it not make a great difference whether "sport" is opposed to "professionalism", "spectatorism", "passive amusement", or "playing to win"?

Now, how does this apply to the larger question of religion?

How much does the meaning given to religion by any particular person govern our judgment of his opinion as to its survival. Have we any right to speak about anything, especially a profound thing, except as we speak with instructed minds? What if the opinion under consideration is wrong- inadequate, biased, or unsound?

Here is an opinion: "Religion is going". What now is the proper procedure? Would you phrase it thus: "Well, what does he mean by religion?"

The only middle ground between a sincere, appreciative understanding and an equally sincere disbelief and opposition is mental apathy, indifference to issues, laziness.

### III. Light on the Problem.

(1.) "Every positive and historical religion presents three distinctive and essential elements: (a) an attempt at a mythical and non-scientific explanation of natural phenomena --or of historical facts; (b) a ~~system~~ of dogmas, that is to say, of symbolic ideas, of imaginative beliefs, forcibly imposed upon one's faith as absolute verities,





even tho they are susceptible of no scientific demonstration or philosophical justification; (c) a cult and a system of rites, that is to say, of more or less immutable practices regarded as possessing a marvelous efficacy upon the course of things, a propitiatory virtue."

(Guyan: The Non-Religion of the Future, p.10)

(2) William James defines religion as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine". (p.31)

Furthermore, the divine is to mean for James "only such a reality as the individual feels impelled to respond to solemnly and gravely and neither by a curse nor a jest."

(Varieties of Religious Experience, p.38)

(3) "Does this mean, then, the end of religion? By no means. Why? Because religion is far too deep a thing to be really amenable to any such conclusions. It may mean, probably will mean, that many who have accepted the ordinary religion will find that in face of the facts of life they can do so no longer. But there will be others who will feel just as keenly that Religion is the one thing left. Man cannot do without its consolations, and his need is so great that in face of all the facts in the world, and against all the logical demonstrations that it is unreasonable, man, as a whole, would still remain religious. If religion were proved untrue, then man would prefer not to believe truth; for after all there is little agreement as to what truth is



apart from religion, whether its ideal is attainable by man, or whether the word really has any meaning. Religion has nothing to fear from rationalism. There may be a great turnover of opinion,...but it will be in both directions. Religion will not really lose by it. And beyond these natural causes there is with us a far greater conviction. God is; and so long as man also is there will be religion... There need be no doubt as to its remaining". W.E.Orchard: (The Outlook for Religion; p.21,22.)

(4) The Chapter on "The Need for Religion" in Harry Emerson Fosdick's "Christianity and Progress" closes as follows:

"Such, then, is the abiding need of religion in a scientific age. To be scientifically minded is one of the supreme achievements of mankind. To love truth as science loves it, to seek truth tirelessly, as science seeks it, to reveal the latent resources of the universe in hope that men will use them for good and not for evil, as science does, is one of the chief glories of our race. When however we have taken everything that science gives, it is not enough for life. When we have facts, we still need a spiritual interpretation of facts; when we have all the scientific forces that we can get our hands upon, we still need spiritual mastery over their use; and beyond all the power that science gives, we need that inward power which comes from spiritual fellowship alone. Religion is indispensable. To build human life upon another basis is to erect civilization upon sand, where the rain descends and the floods





come and the winds blow and beat upon the house and it falls and great is the fall thereof." (p.84-85).

#### IV. Focusing on the Problem -

1. Note carefully and discuss Guyau's three elements of religion, not failing to consider his use of the terms "mythical", "non-scientific", "symbolic", and "imaginative", in reference to a set of facts which he supposes himself to be truly investigating. Is it scientific to do this?

2. Compare the foregoing with William James' attitude upon undertaking a scientific psychological study of religion. Note how, at the very start, James refuses to consider anything religious which already seems petty or condemned to the mind of a reader. Is this scientific?

3. If religion is what Guyau thinks it is, then it is obviously "done for". "Myths", "imaginative beliefs", "magical cult" - if these comprise religion in essence, then surely religion is being rapidly outgrown, and it has no place in a scientific age.

If religion is what William James thinks it is, what would the group say as to its chances for survival?

Will the time ever come when there will be no more solemn and grave responses to things that men consider sacred?

4. Now face the quotation from Orchard's "Cutlook for Religion". He writes these words at the close of the Great War. The war had mostly dark and unspiritual aspects. In war, he says, "Religion does not count". (then follows the quotation cited).



5. The final opinion comes from Dr. Fosdick, probably the best known American interpreter of religion to youth. According to this citation, what is Fosdick's idea of religion? List the three elements in this interpretation, and put them side by side with those of Guyau:

Guyau

- (1) Mythical interpretation
- (2) System of dogmas
- (3) System of rites and customs

Fosdick

- (1) Spiritual interpretation
- (2) Spiritual mastery
- (3) Fellowship (Divine and human)

6. Dr. Fosdick means by "spiritual" such things as "in terms of God", "of meaning in human life", "of purpose in the universe", "of a latent divinity in persons", etc.

These may be called "mythical" with apparent consistency. For a good case in favor of such a non-religious pessimism, read the following two short extracts from the writings of a living scientific philosopher, Bertrand Russell:

What I Believe, Chapter I. (N.Y. 1925)

"A Free Man's Worship", in Mysticism and Logic.

Is not the crux of the whole matter found in the question, "Is science enough for life?"

If so, what about the future of religion?

If not, what is religion's proper place in the future age?

Will there be a place for any "system of dogmas"? (Note that the modern Christian interpreter says nothing of these.)

7. Contrast the following concrete elements comprising a "system of rites and customs" or "cult" with the active elements in the program of a modern Christian:

Cult system

Expiatory sacrifice

Modern Christianity

Prayer (communion with a Divine Person)





|  |  |
|--|--|
| Winning favor from God<br>or Gods      | Placing oneself in a posi-<br>tion to receive Divine aid.                      |
| Unchangeable ceremonies<br>and prayers | Viewing all persons as sacred  |
| Social "tabus"                         | Treating all persons as bro-<br>thers; i.e., individual<br>and social service. |
| Fixed customs of individual<br>conduct |  |
| etc.                                   | etc.   |

Which set of religious elements is more truly representa-  
tive of religion at its best ?

Which set contains the more "scientific" possibilities ?

How could one or the other be made to contribute to the  
full life of a future "age of science" ?

#### V. Testing the Outcome -

In asking the crucial question, "Will religion survive",  
one may be fairly sure that the religion of the future must  
be able to function in a scientific age.

Does this mean any less than that religion must itself be  
subject to the researches of science - say of psychology,  
sociology, history ?

Does it mean that "men of science" may make use of any  
particular prejudice to discredit religion? Is that scientific?

Where does the scientist get his motive for human service?  
Without this motive will the men of the future scientific age  
ever be born at all? or will the scientifically discovered  
powers prove self-destructive? Consider, for instance, the



following equation:

High explosives plus poison gases plus quick transportation plus diplomats lacking religious fellow-feeling  
 $= X$ . Find  $X$  !

Evidently the question "Will religion survive" must really be asked in the form, "What sort of a religion will survive". Crude, primitive, religion cannot. Superstitious religion cannot. What kind of religion will ?

Attempt to make a list (if there is time) of the characteristics of a "religion of the future". Check this up with the religion described in the four Gospels of the New Testament.





(Problem II)

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### PROBLEM III

#### WHO CAN GIVE US THE FINAL WORD ON RELIGION ? - The Problem of Authority.

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##### I. Introducing the Problem -

Many students in these days are feeling the lack of any final authority in morals and religion. There is an insistent demand for such authority. We like to know that our beliefs, our standards, and our actions are firmly and solidly founded. Human nature likes certainly.

But the modern student in search of such certainty is confronted with a hard dilemma. On the one hand he sees the conflicting claims of various beliefs and systems each holding itself up as absolute. On the other hand he sees a spirit which expresses itself somewhat as follows: "There is no need for certainty. In fact, there is no certainty. You can be sure of nothing, and especially of nothing so disputed and unverifiable as is religion".

In short, we apparently have confronting us the Scylla of "Take this or be damned!", and the Charybdis of "Take nothing or be unscientific!". The honest student so often faces this choice that it may almost be taken as the type of modern religious difficulty. The 20th Century man certainly wants to be scientific; but he cannot escape the feeling that there is, after all, such a thing as being "damned".



## II. Experiencing the Problem -

Many young people of Protestant training have been taught that the Bible contains the only true and absolute standard of belief and practice; that the Book is of God's own authorship, miraculously freed from all errors either of scientific or historic fact or of ethical perception. Such persons, when faced with the facts of biological and social evolution, or become acquainted with the developmental character of the Bible itself, seem to find the whole basis of their religion slipping. "If it is not all literally true, where is my assurance?", they ask; "Of what use is the Bible unless it is an absolute authority?".

Students whose training is Roman Catholic find themselves in the same difficulty, but with a somewhat different emphasis. Here the Church has been authoritative, prescribing the proper standards of belief and of conduct. The thinking student often reacts from this authority, realizing that it is purely dogmatic and arbitrary. Thus it is in Catholic France that we find as a reaction, great emphasis on "free thought", and a prevalence of agnosticism and atheism.

Is there any evidence that authoritative religion, Roman Catholic and Protestant dogmatic, is ascending or declining in the United States ?

## III. Light on the Problem -

### (1) Dogmatic conceptions of authority -

(a) The Roman Catholic - The Roman Catholic Church is called "dogmatic" because it claims for itself complete and final





authority in all matters in which religious faith and conduct are concerned. This is an assumption on the Church's part, but it is also an explicit claim.

The following "errors" are condemned in the "Syllabus of Errors" of Pope Pius IX, issued Dec.8, 1864:

"Every man is free to embrace and profess the religion he shall believe true, guided by the light of reason". (#15)

"We may entertain at least a well-founded hope for the eternal salvation of all who are in no manner in the true Church of Christ", (-the Roman Catholic Church). (#17)

"The Church has not the power of defining dogmatically that the religion of the Catholic Church is the only true religion". (#21)

Concerning the authority of the Bible, the Pope and the Church: -

"All those things are to be believed....which are contained in the Word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church, either by her solemn judgment or by her ordinary and universal magisterium, proposes for belief as having been divinely revealed". (Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council, April 27, 1870; Ch.III).

"We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely received: that the Roman Pontiff"(the Pope)", when he speaks ex cathedra,"(i.e., in his capacity as Pope),"...is possessed of infallibility...for defining doctrine regarding faith and morals; and that therefore such definitions are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church".



(First Dogmatic Constitution of the Church of Christ, 1870; Ch. IV.)

(b) The dogmatic Protestant - A certain type of Protestantism is just as much "religion of authority" as is Roman Catholicism. Only one quotation will be made, because the viewpoint is so familiar, and also because one is just as good and just the same as another.

The leading minds of American "fundamentalism" met in a "World Conference on Christian Fundamentals" at Philadelphia in 1919. The following is the first of a series of doctrinal tenets set forth by this conference:

"We believe in the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired of God, and inerrant in the original writings, and that they are of final and supreme authority in faith and life" (God Hath Spoken; Phil.1919, p. 11)

(2) Scientific conceptions of authority -

(a) "The essence of science lies in this, that its calculations are always open to correction, its inferences are open and above board.....Science is not a fixed doctrine, it is a spirit; and in this spirit lies man's hope for knowledge.....We must be willing to subject the facts of the religious life to the same scrutiny that we should give to astronomical phenomena and build our theology upon a strictly empirical basis". Durant Drake: (Problems of Religion, p.256-7).

(b)"The greatest intellectual revolution man has yet seen is slowly taking place by the aid of science. She is teaching





the world that the ultimate court of appeal is observation and experience, and not authority; she is teaching it to estimate the value of evidence". Thomas Huxley: (Lay Sermons; "On the Study of Zoology". Quoted in Drake: Ibid.p.257)

(3) The progressive Christian idea of authority -

"...In the search for religious certainty we should cease to expect any abstractly infallible standard which will settle all questions. No such standard can be found and no such standard is needed, for religion deals primarily with life and not with mathematics. The issues of life abide in the realm of practical certainty rather than in that of abstract infallibility....The glory in life consists just in the practical certainties which are won by doing and trusting. Abstract infallibility would be the death of religion". F.J. McConnell: (Religious Certainty; p.210-211).  
italics ours.

IV. Focusing on the Problem -

(1) The craving for absolute authority is no doubt a human trait of great antiquity and power. Ancient religions and philosophies all show the effects of it. Modern unrest is largely an outcome of the failure to satisfy it.

Does your experience show that this desire for certainty varies with the age of the individual. Is there a time when everything is believed unquestioningly? A time when all is beset by doubts, and the disturbed young person cries out for something absolutely stable on which to pin his faith?

(2) What does this fact mean in relation to the "peace"



and satisfaction promised by religions of authority ? That is, can we be assured that the craving is a good and profitable one, to be satisfied even at the price of scientific honesty and accuracy ?

(3) Would you take the further step demanded by Roman Catholicism and dogmatic Protestantism, and accept the claim of absolute authority even tho it conflicted entirely with scientific fact ?

If you were to feel that you must accept the claims embodied in the Roman Catholic citations given above in order to be "religious", would you choose "being religious"?

Do the citations give the impression that there is any other way?

If "being religious" depended upon the kind of Biblical authority set forth in the "Christian Fundamentals" convention, would you choose to accept that authority ?

Is there any other way out ?

(4) What is the difference between dogma and conviction ? Could there be a really scientific dogma ? Could there be a scientifically founded conviction - (a) with regard to natural law? (b) with regard to human nature? (c) with regard to the moral nature of the world?

Is it dogma or conviction that is needed for the successful carrying out of life's affairs ? Must conviction come from dogma, or can it be built up by an individual or group from intuition, observation, and other experience ?

(5) Here is the crucial point. One may find rest in a religion of authority (or dogma); in such a case he must





reject all claims that conflict. Or one may reject dogmatic claims of particular religions, and set out to build his own religion and convictions. The second course means a complete break with the spirit of the first. But the important thing to notice is that anyone may reject dogma and the spirit of dogmatic religions and yet accept the religious truths that lie in them. There are certain valuable things that make religion what it is and give it the effectiveness that it has. But these are totally independent of any claims made for religion by its supporters. Authority resides in these religious values; they need no outward claims of authority to "put them across".

(6) What are the factors which should be observed in  
\*  
building up one's own conviction ?

How are these convictions to get and increase in authority?

In what way could you make use of the great dogmas of religion to preserve the worth-while truths of universal religious experience? What truth could be gained from these, for example ?

"Salvation"; "Fatherhood of God"; "Atonement";  
"Immortality"; "Divine Immanence"; "One-ness  
of God".

(7) What, in the last analysis, is the source of authority ? Does it come from religious truths themselves or from

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\* It is well to remember that this right to build up one's own religious conviction is easily used as a mere excuse for letting religion slide. This is mental laziness and spiritual stagnation. The problem must be worked out intelligently and courageously, just like any other serious and essential problem.





some claim about them on the part of a historic body or document ?

If a Church is to have this experience kind of authority, where will it come from - a claim or a fact ?

If a document or a book is to deserve the support of your convictions, how must it make good ?

(8) Would you be willing to let doctrines, creeds, books, and organizations get their authority, for you, from their observed results in your own experience? In the same way, would you be willing to accept the historic claims of any particular religion (say of Christianity) according to the standard historical tests that you would have to use as a scientific historian ?

#### V. Testing the Outcome -

(1) In practical life, a useful test of certainty is "pragmatic". That is, it depends upon the working out of facts in practical experience. For one to be a truly religious man is to have tested out the claims of religious tradition and experience, and to have made them one's own. This is true, whatever the faith or whoever the man. Authority, to hold its own, must work out its effects in individual and social experience.

But does the fact of "working" prove the truth of any theory or doctrine held by particular sects or schools? If not, does it prove any more than that a real fact underlies the experience ?

(2) There is a "dogma" of "individual responsibility",



that is, that each man must "choose his path and then walk in it." Do those in the group who are convinced of this as a fact feel that they are accepting a dogma or bowing under an inevitable law of human nature ?

Are there other dogmas having equally convincing facts of experience underlying them ? If so do the following religious doctrines qualify ? How far ?

The Universe is in the long run friendly.

There is a personal God.

Prayer is communion with a Divine Father.

The human race is one, and all are children of God.

God is pleased with personal integrity and social justice.

God can enter into and influence character.

The individual can touch God without any external mediation or "relaying" of the soul's contact.

(3) Do you agree with Bishop McConnell ( III, last quotation) that "the glory of life consists in the practical certainties that are won by doing and trusting"?

Misjudgment of religion sometimes arises from trying to judge it by other people's lives. Would you agree that real conviction comes only from a trial of religion in one's own life ?

What things might be done by an individual or a group in starting such a practical trial? Make a list.

How far can you go without "getting down to particulars" in such a test ? Which parts of the test, as they have been suggested by the group, can be put into practice immediately? Which will require a longer period? Which can safely be referred to the past experience of the race ?

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(Problem III)

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PROBLEM IV

WHAT ARE THE GROUNDS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF ?

The Problem of Faith



## PROBLEM IV

### WHAT ARE THE GROUNDS FOR RELIGIOUS BELIEF ? - The Problem of Faith

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#### I. Introducing the Problem -

This topic follows directly from the previous one, because our idea of authority (or lack of it) is bound to determine our faith. Where you go for your religious certainty will determine whether you have any, and if so, how much.

Faith holds a large place in all religions; so large, in fact, that we often speak of a "faith" as synonymous with a religion. "He is of the Christian faith". Faith is one of the three traditional elements of Christian virtue, and is equally inseparable from any of the World's great religious groups.

Faith is sometimes used to mean mere approval or assent, but this is not enough when applied to religion. The everyday use of the term is quite accurate. When you say, "I have faith in the First National Bank", you mean that it has won your confidence; you are willing to entrust your money to it without hesitation or fear; and when it states a capital and surplus of so many thousand dollars, you unquestioningly assent, and feel secure accordingly. The same would be true of a man in whom you have faith; you have confidence in him; you give him things like confidence,





friendship, and unrestricted hospitality; and you believe him when he tells you something in earnest.

Now religious faith is like this, but it is not nearly so simple or so obvious as some people like to pretend. Comparatively few persons have complete religious faith, like that, say, of little children; and such faith isn't easily acquired. Only the exceptional man can have confidence, trust, and belief in and about anything without a struggle. Realizing this is the first step toward understanding the grounds for religious faith.

## II. Getting deeper into the Problem -

In all our contacts with nature, we take, theoretically, a certain risk. That is, it is purely a practical assumption that rain will not fall out of a **clear** sky, or that sidewalks will not crumble under our feet, or that cutting an artery will cause a flow of blood. What is the basis of this confidence in nature ?

Scientists have a principle called "Uniformity of Nature", according to which they allow themselves to make general laws about things without observing all the possible cases. It is assumed that "there are no breaks in the operations of natural law". Open-minded scientists are perfectly willing to confess that the principle of the uniformity of nature is merely an assumption. What justifies them in this ?

Confidence in persons is much the same. Daily we trust ourselves to motormen, to automobile drivers, to the builders of bridges, and to thousands of others who literally hold



our lives in their hands. Without such confidence our lives would be impossible in this complex civilization.

These instances give the essence of faith, and show how in every department of life there is necessary an assumption with regard to things not yet proved, and a practical confidence in facts not theoretically certain.

### III. Light on the Problem -

The preceding is meant to show what faith is, in the sense in which it can be discussed intelligently. It is meant also to dispose of the purely theoretical argument that no faith of any kind is possible. Abstractly, that is, apart from life, faith is meaningless; so we have introduced it on the plane of the practical, where it lives.

We now turn to various ideas of religious faith. Fundamental differences will appear here, just as in previous discussions:

#### (1) The Roman Catholic -

(a) "Objectively, (faith) stands for the sum of truths revealed by God in Scripture and traditions, and which the Church presents to us in a brief form in her creeds; subjectively, faith stands for the habit or virtue by which we assent to these truths".

(b) "The Catholic Church has always held that there is a two-fold order of knowledge, and that these two orders are distinguished from one another not only in principle but in their object; in one we know by natural reason, in the other by Divine faith; the object of one is truth





attainable by natural reason, the object of the other is mysteries hidden in God, but which we have to believe, and which can only be known to us by Divine revelation". (Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council, III: iv.)

(2) The faith of Protestant tradition -

(a) "This recognition of invisible realities upon God's testimony, and as conditioned upon a right state of the affections, is faith". Augustus Strong: Systematic Theology. Pt.I,Ch.I, III.)

(b) "In its general theistic sense, faith is an ethical bearing toward the Supreme Being, an attitude toward Him of trustful self-committal and self-surrender". H.C. Sheldon: (System of Christian Doctrine. p.439).

(3) Faith as confidence in the unseen -

(a) "Faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen". (Hebrews 11:1.)

(b) "Faith consists essentially in the recognition of a world of spiritual values behind, yet not apart from, the world of natural phenomena". W.R. Inge: (Faith and its Psychology. p.51).

(4) Faith as Heroism-

(a) "Faith always contains an element of risk, of venture; and we are impelled to make the venture by the affinity and attraction which we feel in ourselves... to those eternal principles which in the world around us appear to be only struggling for supremacy". (Same, p.53).

(b) "In the first place.....religion brings all our perplexities to a focus; lifts them on high; concentrates



them on two or three burning points, and shows us with a clearness that admits of no mistaking what a tremendous mystery we are up against in life.

"But if it did only that, it would do us no good, but harm, for it would overwhelm us. So it does the second. While ...it reveals to us ...the deep and amazing mystery of our existence,...it...reveals something yet deeper and more amazing in ourselves, which is more than a match for what it has to face". L.P.Jacks: (Religious Perplexities,p.45-6)

"Faith is neither a substitute for reason nor an addition to it. Faith is nothing else than reason grown courageous - reason raised to its highest power, expanded to its widest vision. Its advent marks the point where the hero within the man is getting the better of the coward; where safety, as the prime object of life, is losing its charm and another object, hazardous but beautiful, dimly seen but deeply loved, has begun to tempt the awakened soul". (Same, p.21).

#### IV. Focusing on the Problem -

1. Most students' perplexities about religion come from the theoretical side of student life, that is, from the conflict of new facts with old beliefs. How far has the group found the general attitude of professors and instructors to be that thinking in the classroom and study can settle ultimate questions of belief? Do you think they can be so settled?

The "inductive method" is now one of the leading con-





<sup>s</sup>  
cept<sup>a</sup> of science. It means a careful collection and classification of data, and forming conclusion from them. Is this not the main method of coming to conclusions that are accurate in practical life? What follows such inductions?

Take the example of the luminiferous ether. How far is this a result of induction, and how far the basis of further inductions? When doubt is cast on such a theory, what is the scientific procedure? -immediate denial? -unqualified acceptance? -further experiment?

How far do your difficulties come from unscientific procedure in regard to religious beliefs? That is, when doubt is cast on some item of your faith, do you blindly hold fast? or throw out? or weigh?

What does it mean to weigh conclusions in practical life? Can you do it all in your study chair? What else may be necessary?

Read, if possible, the following pages, with contexts, from the autobiographies of two prominent Americans:

Washington Gladden: Recollections, p.32-33,36.

Charles M.Cheldon:His Life Story, p.38.

Note how early inductions served as the basis for later solid achievement. Note also that it was not religious dogmas, but religious acts and living, that served as such a basis.

(2) How does the Roman Catholic idea of faith differ from the conception of scientific induction? How does it differ from the kind of faith familiar in practical life? What, according to (1-a), are the objects of Roman Catholic faith - doctrines or simple facts? facts of experience or things "handed down"? How does this conclusion relate to the





## Roman Catholic idea of authority?

According to (1-b) what is the Catholic idea of the relation of religious truth to truth in all other realms ?

If faith means acceptance of revelation, and revelation means the dicta of the Church, what is the inevitable outcome of faith? What two courses of ~~ac~~tion would be open to one who accepted this basis of faith? Would you reject faith, or accept the full teaching of the Church? Or is there another way out ?

What, in your mind, is the outcome of the Roman Catholic theory of the two universes and the two methods of knowledge? Can you accept it, and still give the name "faith" to such things as belief in the uniformity of nature, confidence in your fellow-men, or trusting of institutions ?

It is often stated that the Roman Catholic theory of faith is unsatisfactory, because it separates religion too much from life. Is this true, in your mind?

(3) The orthodox Protestant statements of the meaning of faith represent mature, highly specialized points of view. They illustrate the theological finish of tested and systematized experience. Are they simple enough? Sweeping enough?

The two phrases, "conditioned upon a right state of the affections" and "ethical bearing" convey something essential. What would it be called ? Is there any real faith that is not conditioned by moral rightness ?

Do these two statements presuppose an authoritative revelation ? What is "God's testimony" ?

(4) Recent religious philosophy stresses the terms used by Dean Inge. (3-b) It is a return to the simplicity of early Christianity, as expressed by the author of the Hebrews let-



ter in the New Testament. (3-a).

"Spiritual values" is an abstract term; suggest ways of interpreting it concretely? Some other ways of expressing the same idea are:

There is a "friend behind phenomena"  
 The Universe is fundamentally friendly to man  
 The world is orderly and rational  
 There is a moral government in the world  
 The right will prevail  
 There is an intelligent, personal God  
 I am in the world for a purpose

Can these things or similar things be proved in a laboratory? are any of them self-evident to the uninstructed mind? If capable of any proof at all, how can these faiths be proved?

(5) The "venture" element in faith is its supreme characteristic.

Do Dean Inge and Principal Jacks convey the idea that we are to "stop reasoning and fall back on faith"? (Is this not implied in the Roman Catholic idea, or in others?)

Is not the most promising characteristic of intelligence its venturesomeness, releasing power, and hope of improvement? In so far as intelligence has these qualities, it is allied with faith, and faith gives it promise. Without faith, a mind is dull, habit-bound, lacking in originality. Yet some would have us choose between faith and reason!

Will faith solve the mysteries of evil, death, injustice, -or life itself? What does Principal Jacks say on this point? (Read the second chapter of his Religious Perplexities. This is a short and readable book, and its argument is conclusive)





In the business world, no man hopes to get returns without first making an investment - which involves risk. In scientific research, the scientist is always forming and verifying hypotheses, which are trial theories, and imply risk. In practical life no steps forward are possible without the taking of chances. Can faith about great religious facts be gained without taking risks ?

The "working capital" of religious faith may be very small at the start. It may be only the willingness to "be shown".  
 if  
 But, <sup>if</sup> it be actively invested in living, it is bound to increase in a widening circle. This is a law of human life, like the analagous one in economics or scientific research.

How did Paul the Apostle express this law. (See Galatians 6:7).

## V. Testing the Outcome -

There is no way to prove or test any principle except by the principle of faith. Live it out ! Act as if it were true, and if it is true, a result will follow.

The result is an augmented capital. Larger investment brings greater strength; greater strength enables enlarged investment; and so on in a continuous spiral process.

What is the present scope of your religious capital? To phrase this in definite terms would be a helpful thing. Just how much religious faith belongs to you by right of personal conquest? how much "by bequest"?

How **little** could you start with ? What is the least belief you could call religious, to use as a starter in the process?



Here is a list of things you may have faith in: how far  
can you go ?

Your own existence  
 The existence of other people  
 The testimony of your senses  
 The findings of physical science  
 The expressed experiences of reliable witnesses  
 The word of known persons  
 The friendship of certain persons  
 Your own obligation to others  
 Others' obligation to you  
 The sacredness of human relations  
 Your "purpose" in being alive  
 The "meaningness" of existence in general  
 The morality of the universe  
 The existence of a Supreme Being  
 The personal existence of God  
 The ability of human beings to touch God, in spirit  
 The eternal value of a man's soul  
 Immortality

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A helpful handbook on this subject is Harry Emerson Fos-  
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(Problem IV)

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PROBLEM V

HOW DOES RELIGION RELATE TO CONDUCT ?

The Problem of Morality



## PROBLEM V

### HOW DOES RELIGION RELATE TO CONDUCT? - The Problem of Morality.

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#### I. Introducing the Problem -

The story is told of a colored man, a notorious character, who under the spell of the southern camp meeting revival, arose and testified as follows:

"Bredren, Ah's been a mighty bad niggah. Ah's broken all de ten commandments, but Ah got mah 'ligion still! ".

#### II. Experiencing the Problem -

This story illustrates one side of a perplexing question: can a man separate his religion from his morals?

There are two angles in the reasoning of people about this question. There is, in the first place, the religious viewpoint -common in orthodox Protestant as well as in Roman Catholic circles- that religion is somehow different from the rest of life, and that we should beware of bringing it into practical affairs too much.

Resulting from this is the criticism, from those who do not call themselves religious, that religion doesn't help anyone to be "good" in the sense of unselfish, forgiving, helpful, tolerant, just, etc."There are just as many good people outside the Church as in it", is the common statement. This is probably not true, but the fact does remain that many people who do not make any outward confession of





religion have all the best moral qualities.

Many today are going a step farther, and saying that morality of this kind is enough; that we don't need any religion; ~~that~~ "the golden rule is religion enough for me"; that the Rotary Club and similar organizations are taking over the functions of the Churches, etc.

The second angle is presented in the positive immorality of certain religious individuals and institutions, judged in the light of newer and higher social standards. For instance:

- (a) The encouragement and blessing of wars by Churches.
- (b) Participation of Churches and church people in immoral undertakings for the sake of revenues - ownership of tenements, brothels and breweries.
- (c) Participation of religious people in economic injustice and alliance with oppressive financial interests.

These sins of the Church and of individuals in it are very apparent to those who have a developed moral sensibility. Furthermore, they reflect discredit upon the type of religion which does not condemn, but allows, such social conditions and standards.

We may as well face these criticisms frankly. Without accepting the false charge that hypocrisy is the rule in religious circles, we may confess its presence, and try to straighten out the tangle for ourselves.

### III. Light on the Problem -

1. The primitive idea - morality as a "tabu" of the Deity

"Then David and all the troops with him started for Baal-Judah to bring up the Ark of God.....They placed the Ark of God on a new cart and brot it up from the house of Abin-



adab on the hill, with Uzzah and Ahio, (the sons of Abinadab), leading the cart, uzzah walking beside the ark..... But when they reached the threshing-floor of Nachon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and caught hold of it, because the oxen were slipping; then the anger of the Eternal blazed out against Uzzah. God struck him down on the spot....and he died on the spot beside the ark of God". (II Samuel 6:1-4,6-7; Moffatt's translation).

## 2. A more developed idea - the Ten Commandments -

- I. You shall have no Gods but me.
- II. You shall not carve any idols for yourselves.
- III. You shall not use the name of the Eternal your God profanely.
- IV. Remember to hold the Sabbath sacred.
- V. Remember your mother and your father.
- VI. You shall not murder.
- VII. You shall not commit adultery.
- VIII. You shall not steal.
- IX. You shall not give false evidence against a fellow-countryman.
- X. You shall not covet anything that belongs to a fellow-countryman.

## 3. A highly developed idea -

"You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with your whole mind. This is the greatest and chief command. There is a second like it: you must love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets hang on these two commands." (Matthew 22:37-40)

## 4. A protest against a false idea of religion-

"Religion has lost itself in cults, dogmas, and myths. Consequently the office of religion as a sense of community





and ones place in it has been lost. In effect religion has been distorted into a possession -or burden -of a limited part of human nature, of a limited portion of humanity which finds no way to universalize religion except by imposing its own dogmas and ceremonies upon others; of a limited class within a group; priests, saints, a church." (John Dewey: Human Nature and Conduct; p. 330-1).

#### 5. Religion and morality inseparable.

(a) "The normal man who has advanced from savagery finds his religion sanction his morality, morality which is nothing but regard for others and coöperation with them. By making men feel that the impulse to acknowledge rights in others, to work with them and to further their welfare, is the will of heaven, religion is one of the great agents of human union."

(J.W.Stratton: Psych. of the Rel. Life; p.59,60).

(b) "Reverence at its best brings its own cure for any neglect of men which it may occasion. For high reverence is respect for a God of definite moral character, whose sympathy goes out only to those who act honorably toward their fellow-men. In spite of its occasional contracting interest, religion in its total course is the great ally of morals."

(Ibid. p.152)

#### 6. Religion more than morality -

"There are those who think they have followed Christ when they have obeyed the precepts of the sermon on the mount, loved their neighbor as themselves and done unto others as they would that others should do to them.-- But to stop there





is to stop in the middle, to miss the end of the journey... To follow Christ is to follow a victor in life's battle, a conqueror over suffering and death, thru his loyalty to the Great Companion." (L.P.Jacks: Rel. Perplexities. p.101-2).

#### 7. Religion the basis of Christian morality -

"Whether we like it or not the moral teaching of Jesus is rooted in his religion and cannot be detached from it... There is no way of saving Jesus' ethic at the expense of his religion; but it can never be sufficiently emphasized that he builds always upon the central things in religion... His mind is occupied with the thought of God as righteous, merciful, over-ruling all things for good. From this faith in the sovereign God who is at the same time Father of mankind the morality of Jesus cannot, at any point, be separated." (E.F.Scott: The Ethical Teaching of Jesus; p.121-2).

#### IV. Focusing on the Problem.

1. Morality belongs to all the parts of a man's life that in any way touch the personalities of others.

If "Religion is man's whole bearing toward what seems to him 'Best' or 'Greatest'," what is the proper relation between religion and morality?

2. In primitive times, religion and morality were largely organized around the notion of "tabu". Certain objects and acts were associated with Deity. These were supposed to be contagious, polluting anyone who came into contact with them. The story of Uzzah touching the ark, in which sacred relics were deposited, is a typical illustration of this



stage of religion and morality. (III-1).

Is there any trace of this sort of "tabu" morality in the common ethics of our own day? What, if anything, justifies it?

Is not the idea of sacredness in certain things an essential element of everyday ethics?

What things are sacred, in this sense? Why?

3. In times past, no one thought of trying to maintain religion and morality separately. The original reason for this is illustrated in the great Jewish code containing the Ten Commandments. (III - 2)

Who is represented as laying down the commandments?

Whom do the commandments concern?

Can you classify them according to whether they deal with (a) man's relation to God; (b) man's relation to man.

How many are there of each?

4. Jesus, whatever else he was, certainly belongs at the head of the list of the world's great religious and moral teachers. He summed up the rules of successful living in two commands. (III - 3)

Is one of Jesus' two commands religious, and the other moral?

Or are both religious and both moral?

(In discussing this question, one must consider the Jewish idea, which Jesus held, that all such commands are directly given by God to men, in the form of Laws.)

5. Religions, in the course of their development,





are apt to become abstract and remote from everyday life. But the teachings of the original founders always show more concern with human nature in concrete persons than with philosophical or theological theories.

How did Jesus, for instance, go about to accomplish his teaching? Was he interested in a theory about God, or in showing how God wants men to act?

6. What place should relations with others hold in a religious life, according to Prof. Stratton? (III-5) Note that Prof. Dewey (III-4) is inclined to put the whole emphasis on human relations, to the neglect of the individual's personal relationship to the "Best or Greatest." Can the latter be left out?

In III-5b, Prof. Stratton starts at the opposite end from Dewey. How far will the truth of Prof. Stratton's statement depend on the state of development of man and society?

If you have real reverence for the "Best or Greatest," can you neglect honorable action toward other people?

Can you have such reverence without reverence for the best and greatest in others?

7. Every human being has the capacity to choose either the "best and greatest," which is generally difficult, or something less, which is always easier. According to Dr. Jacks, the man who chooses the harder and higher is making a religious choice. (III-6)

What part does loyalty play in religion?

To what or whom is the religious man loyal?



To what extent is self-denial required?

8. What is the great motive toward living an honest, helpful, unselfish life?

Would any man live such a life unless he was confident that these qualities were permanent, solid, worth while?

One writer says that the exercise of these moral qualities is morality; the confidence that they are eternally worth while and will eventually win out is religious faith. (Everett: Moral Values; p. 380,382)

9. Morality has often meant a set of prohibitions given a religious backing.

What is the proper place of these in self-discipline?

Have you ever considered these rules or prohibitions in regard to their real moral meaning - that is, as regards the relation of human beings to other human beings?

Is this a good final test?

Must it be carried farther, into the field of all social relations? How about war? child labor? liquor traffic? Immigration? labor unions?

10. Two things, according to Jesus, are eternally and unqualifiedly sacred, to be treated as such:

(a) God, the Father, a Person, ethically righteous, loving, and just.

(b) People, of all kinds and races and states. In his mind, these two are inseparable, but the first is basic. (III-7)





Discuss this standard wholly on its own merits.

How has the "Best and Greatest" been defined here?

How would faith in such a God affect human relations?

Starting with (a) could you stop short of (b)?

Starting with (b) could you be motivated by less than  
(a)?

#### V: Testing the Outcome.

(1) One question closely connected with this discussion, but not touched upon, is the question of ones own self. Do you belong in the list of sacred things?

Can any one respect or reverence others who have not self-respect?

Is there any argument on the question whether reverence for a personal God would effect the desire of a man for the integrity of his own character?

(2) Discuss the following list of activities, determining in the light of the previous discussion which are really of moral import, and why; and which require religious motives in the sense suggested under IV:-

- Relations to family - parents, brothers, etc.
- Going to church
- Lodge activities
- Smoking tobacco
- Sex relations outside marriage
- Friendship
- Ownership of corporation stocks
- Military training
- "Cribbing"
- Violation of Prohibition amendment
- Playing cards
- Marriage
- Divorce for incompatibility
- Feeling of superiority to those of other races
- Tolerance of "radicals."
- Courage
- Personal liberty





(Problem V)

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